



# *NEWS*

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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## **RELEASED MEXICAN WOLVES MAY HAVE GIVEN BIRTH; TWO OTHER WOLVES DISPERSING FROM PACKS**

Two Mexican gray wolves reintroduced with family groups into the Apache National Forest of eastern Arizona may have given birth, according to biologists with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Limited movements by the two groups indicate that the adult females may have given birth near their packs' release sites.

The Forest Service closed an area in the Apache National Forest about 10 miles southwest of Alpine with a one-mile radius around the Hawk's Nest pack on May 13 and will post the area with signs. The agency will announce a similar closure for the Campbell Blue pack, about seven miles southwest of Alpine, within a day or two if the pack remains in place during the next 24-48 hours. The Forest Service has also posted campgrounds and trailheads in the forest with additional information about wolves and other predators.

"Now is the time of year when wolves have pups," said David Parsons, Mexican Wolf Recovery Leader. "We're pleased that the two remaining packs have chosen areas with good prey bases." The areas occupied by both packs are near concentrations of elk, which will be calving soon, and away from cattle or areas of human habitation.

In the meantime, two female wolves -- a one-year-old from the Campbell Blue pack [wolf #511] and a two-year-old from the Hawks Nest pack [wolf #494] seem to be dispersing from their packs. Wolf #494 was sighted near the town of Alpine on several occasions and was observed near cows on the morning of May 11 and the evening of May 12. Wolf #511 has traveled widely, wandering outside the designated wolf recovery area on May 9-10 and again on the 13th. It was recently located about five miles north of Showlow, Arizona.

"While dispersal from packs is normal behavior for young wolves,

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the fact is these wolves will not find mates this year and are not in areas that are appropriate for wolves," said Diane Boyd-Heger, a wolf biologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Because of their inappropriate locations, the interagency management team [Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Wildlife Services] has decided to capture the two wolves and will place them temporarily inside the Campbell Blue acclimation pen or at the Sevilleta captive management facility in New Mexico, Parsons added. Possible management actions include re-releasing one or both wolves near the Campbell Blue pack or in a more remote area of the Apache National Forest. The team could also decide to return the two wolves to captivity where they would be candidates for re-release into the wild in the future.

Two other incidents involving wolves and livestock have been reported, but no livestock have been harmed in any of the encounters. On May 5 a rancher saw three or four wolves circling his cattle, which had recently been moved to a pasture about five miles from the Hawks Nest release pen. The rancher reported that he yelled and fired two shots in the air and the wolves moved away. They have not returned to the area since that time.

On May 10, wolf #511 was observed close to a cow and her newborn calf by biologists tracking her from the air. The wolf was frightened away from the livestock by the plane and left the immediate area. Biologists made unsuccessful attempts to capture it on May 9 and 10.

The wolf management team continues to monitor all wolves daily via overflights or ground tracking. Biologists are using noise-making devices to frighten wolves away from areas of human habitation and from livestock when needed.

"Ranchers and other local residents have been very helpful in reporting and helping resolve wolf incidents," said Wendy Brown, a wolf biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service. "Information they provide is very helpful in resolving potential conflicts between wolves and humans."